

**Shaw/Garnet-Patterson, Week 1**  
**December 10, 2007**

Comments:

Two participants attended to discuss Shaw.

- Representative from 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Fund
- Representative from Office of Planning and Development

Issues:

The representative from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Fund discussed some of the issues that were raised during the preparation of the report. The DCPS staff suggested that these issues be recorded and submitted, since there was not any community discussion of them.

- Need to decide how to combine Shaw/Garnet-Patterson
  - Close Shaw
  - Revitalize Shaw; move temporarily to Garnet-Patterson
- Both schools are near Metro, Howard—two positives for both schools
- Additional factors to consider include:
  - Handicap accessibility at Garnet-Patterson?
  - Shaw is a very large space; Garnet-Patterson is much smaller
  - What are the feeder patterns, plans for 6<sup>th</sup> graders? Would Garnet-Patterson be able to accommodate all the students that result from consolidation?
  - Shaw has a glass ceiling (a bad design idea) that would need to be replaced
  - Alternative uses for Shaw—good for office space (DCPS central?)

**Stevens/Francis, Week 1**  
**December 10, 2007**

Question 1: Top concerns about reorganization plan

- There are a lot of schools closing; why not any in ward 3?
- Just took child out of a walking distance school in order to go to Stevens; that school's test scores aren't good but they aren't closing because high enrollment (Burrville), wouldn't want to send child to any of the schools in walking distance.
- We're supposed to have choice under NCLB, and I made a choice to send my child to Stevens. Boundaries in DC symbolize segregation. Do we not have school choice anymore?
- Not our choice to have our students merge with junior high students. Not a good environment for first and second graders.
- Why Stevens? This was the first time Stevens didn't make AYP but also just got a new math program and traditionally Stevens has made AYP, and that's not a valid reason to close Stevens after one year. Not fair to group Stevens with the schools that don't make AYP.
- Not fair to label us a low-attendance school. Our school building is more like a schoolhouse, not like for example Benning which has a much larger building.
- We chose Stevens; Stevens didn't choose us. Is this because of the real estate and they're not telling us the truth?
- Student (1<sup>st</sup> grade): I went to a different school last year and I learned nothing and was very bored. Now I am excited about going to school. I love Stevens. I love my teachers. I made student of the month. I get homework every day. I am safe. (used to go to Brent) Mom has a very high degree of comfort at Stevens.
- Teachers are well-seasoned. Never have to worry about safety.
- My son went to two different charter schools before Stevens. At those schools the teachers weren't experienced; I was there three times a week because they didn't have services and resources. At Stevens the kindergarten teacher is good; my son is 5 and he can read now.
- You have to take into consideration cultural differences.
- Francis was not constructed for pre-K to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. There is no construction that can go on to make me feel comfortable that school will be safe for my kindergartner.
- I don't want my child in a school with older children. That's not an option.
- Integrating us with a school that is in corrective action; why would you put us with another school that is failing?
- There is a culture at Stevens that you will not be able to recreate. Stevens is like a family unit. It's the only school that is teaching my children what I am trying to teach them at home. How to be better people, better citizens.

- I entered my child into several lotteries—Oyster and Murch. Oyster only called back because my child has a Spanish-sounding name, But didn't accept her because Spanish not fluent enough. That's discrimination.
- This will be causing a new problem with out-of-boundary process.
- Parents are not going to be happy with this and you will lose more students because we don't want our kids with junior high students.
- Problem with middle school students didn't just start. When I went to junior high back in 1982, there were five good schools. Even then DCPS didn't implement middle schools well. Will eighth graders be developmentally ready to start ninth grade if they are in one school from pre-K to 8<sup>th</sup>?
- Where did the chancellor get the idea that parents want to keep their kids in one school from pre-K to 8?
- During his campaign, Mayor Fenty went to Stevens and I remember that. I want you (chancellor, mayor) to remember that.

- We have a historic designation. What are you going to do with the property?

A: Will remain within city inventory. Will have a series of community meetings to determine what programs or services will be in the building. There is a history in the District of being able to re-open schools, so that will remain an option.

- We really want to know the underlying reason why our school is being singled out to be closed.
- Which parents told you that they want to keep their children in one school from pre-K to 8?
- What are you going to do to keep me as a customer?
- A: We are concerned about our current students. Parents say that they want comprehensive staffing. This is critical for our children. We can't do that right now because a significant amount of our dollars are going into schools that are not at capacity. We want to provide resources to the students that they will see every day.

- What about school choice?

A: We want parents to have choices for great opportunities in every ward. Right now they don't.

- I can't go through lottery again. There's no guarantee they'll be picked.

A: Students who are impacted will have priority in open enrollment.

- You have no right to break up this working system. You're taking that away.

Stevens always comes up when you look for "best DC schools." My son left DC to go to high school in Virginia and he is still an honor roll student having come from Stevens. We are pro-active parents and don't need music in school. I would much rather have strong reading and math and science in a safe environment and provide the extras on my own.

- Stevens was my school of choice and I don't want to move them again. It isn't too late for you to come to Stevens.

A: You shouldn't have to choose between having a safe environment or having music/art. The goal is to give both to all students. We can ensure that all of the good things continue.

ANC commissioner: This is just like closing the West End Library. We believe that this is all motivated by real estate. There is no other elementary school in our neighborhood. This is a very valuable resource. You are taking everything away from this community.

- As a resident of Ward 4, there is only one school that my son is zoned for, and that school has a focus on family literacy. The focus should be on children. Taking away Stevens takes away everything my son has.
- How will transition work? You say we can keep teachers but I haven't seen any guarantees.
- ANC is having a special meeting on Thursday to vote to protest the closure.
- When will there be a plan for transition? Is this plan set in stone?  
A: It is just a proposal. One of the reasons for these meetings is to hear your concerns and review the proposal and make adjustments.
- So if a majority of parents don't want school to close, would they take that into consideration and not close?  
A: That will be taken into consideration but can't make guarantees about outcome.
- What is the process?  
A: Your notes will be compiled. Will look at overarching themes (e.g. if safety is a concern across all rooms, will re-visit the proposal in light of those concerns).
- Why are no schools in ward 3 being closed?  
A: One of the fundamental criteria is space. We have too much space. In Ward 3, the schools are small, the enrollment is high, the ratio of floor space is the lowest.
- What are other criteria?  
A: proximity to other schools. People disagree on pre-K to 8, about 50-50. Some parents want to keep kids in one school, some parents don't think it's a good idea.
- Studies from early childhood experts say it's developmentally bad for young children. You should prioritize developmental needs of children over use of space.  
A: We have to differentiate between a school and a program. Programs are not going to disintegrate because of move to a new building. The program will move to a different school.
- Will there be another proposal after these meetings?  
A: We made a conscious decision that we want to move fast so that we can have cost savings and get good programs in schools. We want to be

- ready in time for out of boundary process. But the idea of the process is to advance a proposal as a straw man for people to react to. We knew we would find out new things about schools that we didn't know already. Puts new issues on the table. My hope is that you do take this seriously.
- So no new proposal in middle of the process, but a new proposal at the end?
  - A: Correct.
  - We have a proposal for Stevens, we sent it to the mayor and chancellor and Council members and we want to know that it is being looked at.
  - A: I will make sure it gets looked at.
  - Why isn't Deborah Gist here?
  - A: This is a local issue, not a state issue. Chancellor Rhee reports directly to the mayor. State sets standards and accountability.
  - Who is senior staff? We want to know that you are taking our concerns back. There is a high out of boundary proportion at Stevens because we want our kids to go there.
  - Why close schools period (any schools)?
  - A: We are spending money on maintenance, upkeep, utilities for underutilized buildings. If we consolidate, we can direct those dollars to students. We can use those dollars for PE teachers, music teachers, art teachers to provide a full academic program.
  - What does Chancellor Rhee consider an appropriate student:teacher ratio?
  - A: That is set by WTU in contract and we adhere to that. It is different at different levels (by grade)
  - Where should ANC and Foggy Bottom Association send their protest?  
A: Directly to the chancellor
  - You are leaving our community without an elementary school. Was there any consideration about other schools in the area?  
A: We looked at planned housing, birth rates in neighborhood, where students are coming from.
  - If my child doesn't get picked for a new school because can only choose three, ward 7 isn't an option for me.  
A: I just learned that there isn't a process if don't get into three choices, so we will develop a new process to follow up.
  - The chancellor said that impacted students will get first priority.
  - And in my ward lots of schools are slated to close. So the odds of my kids getting in anywhere are not good. I've tried every year to get my children into Murch. This is segregation. Are you closing schools so that I'm forced to stay in my ward and take away my choice? And morale goes down if you are looking at the risk of a pink slip. So moving a program doesn't mean that teachers are all going to move with the program. I really want you to tell me without generalizations why Stevens is on the list.
  - What happens to our teachers and principal? Are they just picking us up and moving us all to a new location?

A: Teachers have a choice to move with the program or go to another program. We have to go by the collective bargaining unit. This includes the principal as well.

- I don't feel that teachers are expendable resources. These teachers were there when I was a student. You're taking away my son's shot at success. I don't have the resources to pick up the pieces for the transition, hire a counselor to help with the transition.
- Stevens is a historic building. Why was the mayor threatened by a question about selling buildings? You can't take that away just because it's prime real estate. This is a primarily African-American school. This is discrimination and no one is addressing this—you are leaving the predominantly white schools open.

A: We studied enrollment patterns and we knew that our research would be relevant. For example, there are only 12 DCPS students who live within a half mile of Stevens. In ward 3, because there are so few schools and they are so small, in ward 3 there is less than 1 million sq ft of DCPS space as opposed to ward 5 with 2.7 million sq ft, so ward 3 schools are crowded. It is a problem because housing is segregated throughout the District. But do you close schools where students already live more than a half mile from school and that are already overcrowded?

- ANC Commissioner: We need to build our community and our community is being raped for development.
- If Stevens were at or over capacity, would they be on the list to be closed?

A: Probably not.

- Why not consider academic program? What about the quality of the Stevens program?

A: The program will move to Francis.

- I don't want my kid tucked away in a preK-8 environment. Ross is also small but they were given the opportunity to turn around. If we're going to merge, merge us with a competitive program, not with a school in corrective action.
- Why not consider merging us with Hyde, Hearst, Ross, or Thomson? They have similar age group and academic performance.